

## **Statement of Ashley Braunstein**

### **Appropriations Committee**

**February 23, 2017**

My name is Ashley Braunstein. I live in Norwich, Connecticut. I am writing to support the Connecticut Legal Rights Project and Attorney Karyl Lee Hall who saved my housing certificate after it had been taken away by the Thames Valley Council for Community Action.

My certificate was granted to me by the Connecticut Collaborative on RE-Entry because I had a long history of homelessness and chronic mental health issues. My Reliance House case worker and I thought we were following all the rules but last fall, TVCCA took my certificate away because they said that I did not report one of my family member's absence from my apartment and because DCF would not give me a letter giving a date for my reunification with my child. We had a hearing at TVCCA but we lost and I had to move out of my apartment and was again homeless.

At that point, I turned to CLRP because my case worker had heard that they might represent me in an appeal of the decision to take my certificate away. Attorney Karyl Lee Hall requested an evidentiary hearing and advocated for a reconsideration of the decision. We had the hearing and my case worker testified that she did not understand that my child's absence from my apartment needed to be reported even though I was seeking reunification with my child. My case worker's boss also testified that if my certificate was taken away, I would be homeless and my certificate would be retired and not used again. Attorney Hall submitted more evidence on DCF's unwillingness to provide a letter to TVCCA.

The hearing officer listened to the facts of my case and the arguments we presented. She agreed to reverse the earlier decision. Without the help of Attorney Hall and CLRP there is no question in my mind that I would be facing the winter on the streets. I am grateful for my certificate. I am grateful for the housing. I am grateful for CLRP's assistance. Please continue to fund CLRP so that they can help people like me. CLRP was my last hope.